

REMARKS

This response resubmits claims 1, 4, 5, 7, 9-13, 15, and 17-20; claims 2, 8, 14, and 16 stands withdrawn. Claims 1, 10, and 15 are independent claims.

In the Final Office Action the Examiner rejected Claims 1, 4, 9, and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Best (3,290,418). Claims 4, 5, 7, 10-13, 15, and 17-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Best ('418) in view of Gravely (2,015,669), Renner (2,355,559), Snyder (3,225,461), and/or Knoll (3,458,614).

Applicant will advance arguments hereinbelow to illustrate the manner in which the presently claimed invention is patentably distinguishable from the cited and applied prior art. Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

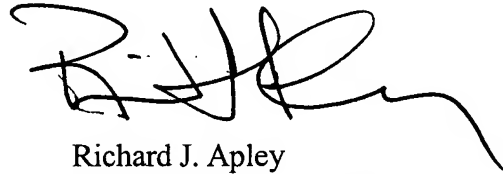
Each of the independent claims (1, 10, and 15) contains the limitation that the vacuum forming step forces the heated plastic sheet "***against the walls and contours of said mold cavity***". In contradistinction to this recitation, the Best ('418) reference possesses a mold cavity 14 that uses a flexible and compressible insert 12 "seated within the cavity 14." (column 4, lines 21-23). Hence, the plastic sheet 28 is forced against the flexible and compressible insert 12 rather than the rigid mold cavity 14. The Best disclosure is replete with references to the importance and significance of the compressible insert 12. For example, column 7, lines 60-64 state, *inter alia*, "One of the most significant features of the mold and method of using same... is the fact that minor variations in dimension can be accomplished with the ... compressible inserts" Another significant example is seen in Best's Fig. 4 wherein the insert 12 is raised from the mold cavity and the molded article 26 is lifted from the insert and not the mold cavity. The Best insert does not permit the same details that result from Applicant's molding directly against the rigid mold.

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For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in condition for allowance. Furthermore, rejoinder and allowance of Claims 2, 8, 14, and 16 is respectfully requested. If such is not the case, the Examiner is requested to kindly contact the undersigned in an effort to satisfactorily conclude the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. J. Apley', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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RCL: dht